

## [Chas. Henry Stopher]

LM

Week No. 6

Item No. 10

[Words?] [??]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE February 17, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

1. Name and address of informant Chas. Henry Stopher, 29th & [Leighton?], Lincoln, Nebraska.

2. Date and time of interview 2 p.m. to 4:40 p.m.

3. Place of interview Home of informant

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant C. [?]. Krause, 2049 Monroe St., Lincoln, Nebraska.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of house, room, surroundings, etc.

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Dingy, drab room, smoke begrimed, dark with battered furniture, coal stove, and faded pictures hung promiscuously, tattered floor covering. Everything speaks of long usage and crowded disorder. Room reflects the unkempt appearance of its aged occupant for whom it evidently serves as a living and bedroom. The house itself is unpainted and ramshackle, a bleak structure in a cluttered yard, on a muddy ungraded street devoid of sidewalks. Surroundings are houses just as drab, looking across a barren point of land to the railroad tracks and the open country beyond. Partially wrecked and decrepid autos occupy every nook and cranny. C. 15 Neb.

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE February 17, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Charles Henry Stopher, 29th & Leighton

1. Ancestry German-American
2. Place and date of birth Adams Co., Indiana, Sept. 9, 1857
3. Family Wife, 2 daughters, 1 son living
4. Places lived with dates Adams Co., Ind., 1857 to 1867, Saunders Co., Nebr., 1867 to 1868, Lincoln Nebr., 1869 to 1880, Frontier Co., Nebr., 1880 to 1890, Wahoo., Nebr., 1890 to 1895, Lincoln, 1895 to date.
5. Education, with dates  
  
Indiana, 1863 to 1867; some in Nebraska, dates vague.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

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Farmwork 1870 to 1895; well-digger 1880 to 1900; grading and ditch construction 1900 to 1930.

### 7. Special skills and interests

Plays fiddle; well digging.

8. Community and religious activities No church affiliation. Has own code of religion, which does not embrace any particular church.

9. Description of informant Slight of stature, bent and stooped with age, infirm, eyes do not match and [glazed?] with yellowish tinge, one staring as if sightless.

10. Other points gained in interview Unkempt beard, mumbling voice except when enthuses on some subject, health poor. Believes in tolerance in religion and quotes freely from Bible. While not belonging to church, thinks they are all right. Religion is apparently his life and only interest now.

### FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

I remember when my father returned from the Civil War and we came to Nebraska. It was bare prairie and we missed the big trees back home and the maple syrup and sugar. These fellers that say they can make maple sugar after the trees begin to leaf out don't know what they are talking about. The sap won't go to sugar then, just syrup. They wanted to make it and just put in 'Orleans' sugar with it to thicken.

Out in Frontier county, we hoemstaded and lived in a sod house. I used to play for lots of dances there in the sod houses. They came for miles in wagons. Had to hitch a chain around the wheels to keep the wagon from running down on the horses when they crossed the draws and gulches.

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I worked as a well-digger and sometimes we dug 'em down 300 feet. Sometimes we run into big bones of mammoths.

At that time there were no cemeteries and when some one died they were buried on the prairie. A lot of these graves have been forgotten and no one knows where they are today.

Down at Edgar, Nebraska, they moved a whole cemetery about 1881. My wife was there and saw it. Moving the Cemetery at Edgar as told by Mrs. Stopher.

A new cemetery was laid out at Edgar and the job of moving all the buried people to the new ground was let by contract. It took almost a year. We knew one of the men who was buried there and so we went to see him dug up. They opened the box and coffin. He had only been buried a year. His hair had grown away down over his shoulders and there were curly whiskers, sort of greenish on his face. The fingernails had grown long too. Everyone there who remembered how he looked at the funeral said there was a great growth of his hair and nails since death.

One man brought his second wife and all his children to watch them take up his first wife.

They brought their dinner and eat it there by the grave and uncovered corpse. Some of the folks would get up in the wagon and ride with their dead to the new grave.

They did not open all the boxes, but many of them fell to pieces and the corpse would tumble out. Some of them were just bundles of bones and rotten clothes. When the boxes were taken from the graves, the ground underneath was slick and peeled up like a dry mud hole.

Two or three of the coffins, when they lifted them out, weighed three or four times what they must of at burial.

None of these were opened but the men thought they were petrified they were that heavy.

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'Just heavy with water,' some said. No new coffins were furnished and the people did not look on it as a second burial. That was all over. Sometimes they would shovel the rings and handles and pieces of the coffins and boxes out of the graves. Every grave was left open until all had been dug up then they were all filled in. After it was all over, they burned the wagon and harness that they used to haul the bodies to their new resting place. Tombstones were moved but the fence which were built around lots of the graves and the pieces of the broken boxes were gathered up by the relations and hauled away to be used as firewood.

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The old cemetery was turned into a cornfield after it was all over. Interview resumed by Mr. Stopher

'Ol Man' Garrett, who lived near my father's place at Wahoo, brought some walnut lumber over and asked him to make a coffin. He wanted to see his coffin before he died. But it wasn't finished when one day they saw the stepson coming with a measuring stick. The old man had died, and my father finished the coffin then.

"Wyuka" cemetery here in Lincoln is the Indian name for "Place of Rest." But in Frontier county the school teachers used to board a week at each of the neighbors near the school. It was the custom. There was no charge. Church was held in the school houses by a 'circuit rider' preacher.

I worked hard all my life and never begrudged anyone anything and it is my creed that everyone be let alone in his religion and not judge or be judged. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

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FORM D

(Supplementary) Occult Power of a Woman at Ithaca, Nebraska.

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This woman claimed to be physic and Mr. o'Kane of Ithaca state that she located some stolen cattle for him and he got them back. She had located several dead bodies of missing persons in Nebraska. Sometime in the latter nineties a station agent disappeared from Ithaca. Mr. o'Kane sent this woman two photographs, one of the man and one of somebody else.

She picked out the missing man's picture and replied that he had been murdered and his body thrown into the Platte river. The place, where it was, she said, was by a small island where the water ran deep and was over hung by willows.

They had her come to Ithaca and she led the men to the river almost due east. With a boat they crossed to a small island, which was exactly as she had described. Here at a certain place, she held her hands over the water and as they became rigid and the veins distended she went into a trance and perspired profusely.

For a time she remained this way and then speaking again she said, the body was here and was covered by six feet of sand.

The people believed her but could not recover the body.